

But Democrats in Congress don't seem to be acting with any urgency. The Senate spends day after day on midlevel nominations, and our colleagues spend all their time in backroom talks over partisan plans while their basic duties sit here in limbo. So far, Democrats' partisan ambitions have taken precedence over basic governance. That needs to change. According to their own Treasury Secretary, they have a few weeks to finally get moving.

BUDGET

Mr. President, now, on a related matter, while Washington Democrats neglect basic governance, they are still trying to write another reckless taxing-and-spending spree behind closed doors. Many details are still fuzzy, but one basic truth is very clear: Their far-left wish list will hurt families and help China—new pain and new burdens for American families, and new advantages for competitors like China.

Take, for example, the Democrats' radical anti-energy agenda that is downstream from the Green New Deal. This sprawling plan for more Washington intrusion into families' everyday lives is set to upend the reliable and affordable domestic energy that literally drives our country. The Democrats' effort to enforce elite liberal fashions would directly target the jobs and the industries that support some of the hardest working blue-collar communities in our country.

Some families would lose their livelihoods altogether. Many more would face higher heating bills, higher electric bills, and higher prices to put gas in their cars. Democrats want to tear a big hole in Americans' wallets, right where they can least afford it.

Right now, as we speak, many of our allies in Europe are preparing for major energy disruption this coming winter. Here are a few recent headlines:

Europeans brace for hard winter as energy price surge hits households.

Empty shelves, gasoline shortages and sky-high energy prices? Britain is facing a 'difficult winter.'

Germans' Green Energy Resolve Faces Pain in Post-Election Winter.

And from just yesterday:

Europe's Energy Crisis Is Coming for the Rest of the World, Too.

This is no time for America to declare war on our own independence, on the affordable forms of energy that power our country. The rest of the world is battenning down the hatches for a global natural gas crunch that could leave entire countries rationing winter heat, and President Biden wants to let radical progressives declare war on American fossil fuels? Really? Is this a joke?

The latest taxing-and-spending spree would open multiple new fronts in the Big Government war on fossil fuels. It would make our electricity grid more like California's: higher costs, less reliability, and more blackouts. It would slap countless new costs and fees on domestic production and ban important

prospects for U.S. drilling. It would double down on the Obama administration's ham-fisted effort to police emissions that was so legally bizarre it couldn't get past the Supreme Court.

American families and American workers benefit from energy that is affordable and abundant. Washington Democrats are pursuing far-left policies that would reduce supply and jack up prices.

So Democrats' plans would have American families hurting badly, but it is not even like all this sacrifice would buy us some big national advantage. It is just the opposite. Their proposals would be a huge gift—a huge gift—to adversaries like Russia and China. They would set the United States back on the global stage.

To give just one example, the Democrats are drafting blunt mandates for more solar panels. Somebody should tell our colleagues that China currently supplies about three-quarters of the world's solar panels. They have also largely cornered the market on some of the necessary raw materials and critical minerals.

So, look, we are going to borrow money from China to send a windfall right back to Chinese miners and manufacturers? Is that the master plan? I am not sure any of these ideas have received more than 5 minutes of thought, but in a matter of days they want to turn all these hair-brained schemes actually into law, and the Chinese solar bailout is just one example.

Let's look at the big picture. Countries that wish us harm will be thrilled to see America make ourselves less competitive and more reliant on imports. They will go roaring by us, increasing their prosperity and emissions, no matter what we do. It hurts families. It helps China.

A war on American energy just as the rest of the world is steeling for shortages—this is just one piece of the Democrats' reckless taxing-and-spending spree, along with historic tax hikes, more intrusion into family lives, and new IRS snooping in every citizen transaction over a few hundred dollars—hurting families and helping China.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Mr. President, last night was a low point in the recent history of this Chamber. With the government shutdown only days away and a default crisis coming in a matter of weeks, the Senate was faced with a simple and urgent question: Shall the

Members of this Chamber allow the Federal Government to pay its debt and stay open, or will its Members accelerate our country toward a shutdown and a first-ever default?

Yesterday, we got our answer. Republicans voted unanimously—unanimously—to block legislation to keep the government open and prevent an unnecessary default on our debt.

Republicans are now the official party of default, the party that says America doesn't pay its debts; the party that runs up the balance on the credit card, receives an invoice in the mail, and sends the bill straight to the shredder.

No average family could get away with what the Republicans are trying to do; that is for sure. But Republicans here shrug their shoulders and say: We incurred the debt, but we don't have to pay it. Republicans would let the country default for the first time in history, and it will be the American people who pay the price.

Now, Republicans have said for weeks—for weeks—that the United States must never be allowed to default. They said the debt ceiling, of course, needed to be raised. They said to do so otherwise was to play with fire. But when given the chance to actually put the fire out, Republicans chose to spray it with gasoline instead. And now our country is staring down the barrel of two Republican-manufactured crises: a government shutdown and a default on the national debt.

But, fortunately, there is an easy way to stave off disaster. Last night, the Republican leader—I believe he did again this morning—last night and this morning, the Republican leader cited an example from the 2000s, during which Republicans held unified control of government and provided the votes to increase the debt limit. The Republican leader said that example was “exactly the situation we are in now.”

What Leader MCCONNELL conveniently left out is that back then, there was a consent agreement, requested by the Republican majority leader, that cleared the path for the Senate to vote to increase the debt limit at a majority threshold—only one party—allowing the minority party to vote no but also preventing a catastrophic default.

Let me be clear: I am still of the belief that addressing the debt limit, which includes debts incurred by both parties, should be done in a bipartisan way. But let's see if Leader MCCONNELL truly wants what he is asking for, truly wants what he favorably looked upon as happening in the early 2000s to allow to happen again.

Later this afternoon, I will ask unanimous consent for the Senate to hold a vote to increase the debt limit at a majority threshold. In other words, we would get consent that you only need 50 votes, not 60, on this vote to increase the debt limit. And that is what happened in the past.

It would be very similar to the process that Leader MCCONNELL cited yesterday, favorably, which allowed for

the debt limit to be increased without the minority party providing any of the votes needed to do so.

So if Republicans want to abscond from their responsibilities, not vote to pay the debt they incurred, so be it. That is a bad thing. It is a bad precedent. But this is the way out. It is a way out. It is a straightforward proposition: If Republicans really want to see the debt ceiling raised without providing a single vote, I am prepared to hold that vote. I can't imagine the Republican leader would object to his own request—his own request.

DEBT LIMIT

Now, taking a step back, Mr. President, we need to remember we didn't need to be in this position at all. We could have been well on our way to resolving these avoidable crises last night. The debt ceiling has been raised 80 times over the past 60 years under both Democratic and Republican Presidents, under both unified and divided government.

Ten years ago, Republican opposition to extending the debt ceiling was considered a fringe, a radical idea. The Republican Speaker at the time called the notion of holding the debt ceiling hostage to political ends "insanity."

The Republican leader himself 2 years ago said we needed to raise the debt ceiling because "America can't default," otherwise that would be a disaster. His words.

Well, after last night, it is clear "insanity" and "disaster" are now the Republican Party line, and it is endangering the very bedrock upon which both our economic viability and financial credibility stand.

I hope that our Republican colleagues can walk us back from the ledge in a few hours, but it is a sad state of affairs to see one of America's two major political parties so casually, so gleefully playing with the livelihoods of tens of millions of Americans, all for basically a cheap political goal.

Democrats, meanwhile, are not going to abscond from these core responsibilities. Keeping the government open and preventing default is vital to our country's future, and Democrats are going to make sure we do not lapse on either, in spite of the dangerous path Republicans have chosen to take us on.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

BUDGET

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am glad that the Democratic leader came to the floor after the Republican leader. He certainly clarified some of the statements that were made by Senator McConnell and brought a dose of reality into the picture. I listened carefully to Senator McConnell's speech, and I was waiting for one word. I knew he would say it at some point, and yet I don't think he did. I might have missed it, but I don't think he ever used the word "filibuster"—"filibuster," the requirement of 60 votes to proceed with the business of the Senate.

The reason why that is essential is the Democrats are prepared to accept the responsibility of funding the government and dealing with our national debt, acknowledging our debt ceiling. And if the Republicans don't care to be part of that conversation—or to engage in it, that is their wish—that is what they can have. But Senator McConnell has put in a filibuster, a requirement of 60 votes, which makes it literally impossible for the Democrats on their own to accept their responsibility. He didn't mention that the entire time.

I think we have reached a new low point in the U.S. Senate, where the Republican leader and his followers, to a person, are prepared to jeopardize the economy of the United States for purely political reasons. We know that this filibuster means we need Republican votes to move this measure. And he has made it quite clear that he won't give those votes, at least as of yesterday. I can only hope that Republican Senators going home, maybe this weekend, hearing from their constituents and businesses, will have second thoughts about this and accept that bipartisan responsibility that we all face.

There is a second you had to listen very carefully to catch with Senator McConnell's opening statement. He went on to say at great length that the last time we passed a debt ceiling extension was in August. And, he said, incidentally, all the spending leading up to August was covered by that debt ceiling. Well, that may have been true. What did he fail to tell us? There was another bill that he voted for, Trump supported, the Republicans supported, and the Democrats voted for, too, in December for \$900 billion in spending. That wasn't covered by the earlier August debt ceiling. He knows that. So to say all the debt of the Trump administration has been taken care of just isn't the fact. And I am glad we have a chance to clarify that.

He seems to think that we are going to "hurt families and help China" if we press forward with the reconciliation bill. Does it hurt families to find an affordable way to have quality daycare for their kids? I don't think so. Does it hurt families when children get a chance for pre-K education so they are ready for school when the day comes? Does it hurt families when we extend education from K-12 to K-14 and say to our community colleges, We are going to give you a mission: Prepare the workforce for the 21st century? Give these Americans the skills they need for a good paycheck and a home and a family and a future.

According to the Senator from Kentucky, that hurts American families. I think he is just flatout wrong. It helps them in critical ways. It really addresses expenses and challenges they face and need a helping hand to succeed.

And in terms of helping China, a competitive American workforce, investment in research and innovation does not help China. If we invest in this

country, in its people and its ideas, we have always succeeded and led the world.

So I disagree with the Senator from Kentucky completely. His approach—tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans, corporations that, frankly, can escape any tax liability—hasn't worked. And it won't work. It is fundamentally unfair, and it fails to invest in the people that need it the most: working families, middle-income families, children and their future.

(Mr. PADILLA assumed the Chair.)

IMMIGRATION

Mr. President, coincidentally, last Friday, you and I made a trip to Chicago.

Senator PADILLA, as chairman of the Immigration Subcommittee of Judiciary, joined me in visiting one of the most amazing neighborhoods in the city. We spent the day in Little Village, a neighborhood in the southwest part of the city known as the "Mexican Capital of the Midwest."

During our visit, we walked down 26th Street, the commercial heart of Little Village. It is lined with more than 100 family-owned shops and restaurants. People travel from all over the country to try their homemade tamales, stop for their quinceañera dresses, and experience a little slice of Mexico right here in America.

Families who own the businesses on 26th Street are proof that the American dream is alive and well.

Remember La Chiquita Grocery? I think that the founder—I guess it was almost 35 years ago—took the venture of opening a grocery store and now has seven or eight of them in the region. And they are so proud of their anchor store that we were guests in, to show us all the things available to folks in the neighborhood.

Whether these folks arrived in our country a few years ago or a few generations ago, these families contribute to the economic vitality of the city of Chicago every day. Little Village, that we visited, is a major economic engine in Chicago. That 2-mile stretch of 26th Street is the second highest grossing shopping district in all of Chicago. And those family-run businesses generate nearly \$1 billion in sales each year.

Bilingual communities like Little Village make America richer and stronger, culturally and economically. They are living proof that immigrants are still an essential part of America's future. And there are millions of people who have been contributing to our economy and our communities for years. But they have been left behind by our broken immigration system.

That is exactly what the Presiding Officer and I, along with many of our colleagues in the Democratic caucus—that is exactly what we are trying to include as an immigration reform in the Build Back Better package that will come before the Senate in the coming days.

Let me tell you about one of these immigrants that we are focused on.